

**House Resolution**

**No. 13**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Williams**

March 14, 2013

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House Resolution No. 13—Relative to homeless court programs.

1 WHEREAS, There are approximately 132,931 homeless people  
2 in California; and

3 WHEREAS, People experiencing homelessness often receive  
4 citations for minor offenses such as traffic tickets, infractions, and  
5 various minor misdemeanors, including jaywalking, riding public  
6 transportation without a fare, sleeping in public places, illegal use  
7 of shopping carts, possession of an open container of alcohol in  
8 public, obstructing traffic on the sidewalk, and sleeping on a bus  
9 bench, as well as any warrants that arise for failure to resolve these  
10 minor offenses; and

11 WHEREAS, Outstanding warrants limit the reintegration into  
12 society of the homeless, deterring them from using social services  
13 and impeding their access to employment. They are effectively  
14 blocked from obtaining driver's licenses, job applications, and  
15 rental agreements; and

16 WHEREAS, Homeless courts are special court sessions held in  
17 local shelters or community centers for homeless defendants to  
18 resolve outstanding misdemeanor offenses and warrants. Several  
19 jurisdictions in California have instituted Homeless court programs,  
20 including the Counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno,  
21 Humboldt, Kern, Santa Clara, Sonoma, and Ventura, and the Cities  
22 of Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, San Joaquin, and Santa  
23 Maria; and

1 WHEREAS, Homeless court programs reduce court and jail  
2 costs, build community collaboration, improve access to court,  
3 and assist homeless people in accessing vital services and jobs;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, To counteract the effect of criminal cases pushing  
6 homeless defendants further outside society, these programs  
7 combine a progressive plea bargain system, alternative sentencing  
8 structure, assurance of “no custody,” and proof of program  
9 activities to address a full range of misdemeanor offenses and bring  
10 homeless defendants back into society; and

11 WHEREAS, These courts are funded and operated by local  
12 jurisdictions; and

13 WHEREAS, The benefits to a county that has instituted a  
14 successful homeless court program are extraordinary; now,  
15 therefore, be it

16 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California*, That the  
17 Assembly hereby encourages county governments to find ways to  
18 make homeless courts more accessible, such as allowing people  
19 to bring multiple cases to court per year instead of limiting them  
20 to one, and allowing fines to be recalled from collection by the  
21 county or collections agencies; and be it further

22 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
23 of this resolution to the author for the appropriate distribution.